

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4899

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE)

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND ON VICE PRESIDENT'S POSITION IN
CORREGIDOR DAY CEREMONY

REF: STATE 106150

THE JOINT BATAAN DAY-CORREGIDOR DAY COMMEMORATION CEREMONY WILL
RECOGNIZE TWO SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN
HISTORY. BATAAN DAY IS USUALLY COMMEMORATED ON APRIL 9 AT THE
ALTAR OF VALOR ON MT. SAMAT, BATAAN AND CORREGIDOR DAY IS
OBSERVED ON MAY 6 AT THE SURRENDER SITE ON BOTTOM SIDE ON
CORREGIDOR ISLAND. THIS YEAR, A JOINT CEREMONY WAS SCHEDULED
ON MAY 4 TO COINCIDE WITH THE VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE.

BOTH ANNUAL CEREMONIES ARE MOST SOLEMN AND ALMOST SACRED
EVENTS FOR ALL FILIPINOS. SEVERAL THOUSAND FILIPINOS MAKE
ANNUAL PILGRIMAGES TO WITNESS THE CEREMONIES. LACK OF
ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION PREVENTS MANY MORE FROM ATTENDING.
USUALLY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE FIRST LADY
PARTICIPATE AS GUESTS OF HONOR. OTHER HONOR GUESTS INCLUDE
THE AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES, AND SINCE 1972
THE AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN. RANKING FILIPINO AND AMERICAN
MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS ARE ALSO INVITED. THE
CEREMONIES RECEIVE ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FROM VETERANS
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ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE AMERICAN LEGION, VETERANS
FEDERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, AND DEFENDERS OF BATAAN AND
CORREGIDOR. OTHER THAN INVOLVEMENT OF JAPANESE AMBASSADOR
IN RECENT YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN NO THIRD COUNTRY PARTICIPATION,
THOUGH DIPLOMATIC CORPS USUALLY ATTEND CEREMONIES.
IN 1953 THE U.S. CONGRESS AUTHORIZED THE CORREGIDOR/BATAAN
MEMORIAL COMMISSION TO CONSTRUCT A PACIFIC WAR MEMORIAL TO

COMMEMORATE THE SERVICES OF SOME 5 MILLION VETERANS WHO SERVED IN THE PACIFIC AREA UNDER THE AMERICAN FLAG, PARTICULARLY THE AMERICAN AND FILIPINO SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THAT STRUGGLE.

ON AUGUST 16, 1954, PRESIDENT RAMON MAGSAYSAY DECLARED CORREGIDOR ISLAND AND BATAAN AS NATIONAL SHRINES. HE ALSO ESTABLISHED A CORREGIDOR-BATAAN NATIONAL SHRINES COMMISSION TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. BATAAN-CORREGIDOR MEMORIAL COMMISSION.

PUBLIC LAW 88-240 AUTHORIZED A WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL TO BE CONSTRUCTED ON CORREGIDOR AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$1,000,000. THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HAVE AVAILABLE THE TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND CONSTRUCTION DESIGN CAPABILITIES OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. THE MEMORIAL, DESIGNED BY THE FIRM OF NARAMORE, BAIN, BRADY AND JOHANSON OF SEATTLE, WASHINGTON IN COORDINATION WITH THE VA., WAS A COOPERATIVE EFFORT BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES. THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO ADMINISTER AND MAINTAIN PERPETUALLY THE MEMORIAL PROPER, THE CONTIGUOUS BATTLEFIELD AREA AND CORREGIDOR ISLAND AS A WHOLE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR CONSECRATED GROUND, HOLDING IT SAFE FROM COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION.

ON JUNE 22, 1968, THE MEMORIAL WAS DEDICATED BY PRESIDENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MARCOS AND U.S. AMBASSADOR MENNEN WILLIAMS. THIS CEREMONY ALSO MARKED THE OFFICIAL TURNOVER OF THE MEMORIAL TO THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT.

TODAY. CORREGIDOR IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES. MANY OF THE OLD GUN EMPLACEMENTS AND THE RUINS OF FORMER BARRACKS WHICH HOUSED THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS SERVE TO REMIND ALL VISITORS OF THE TERRIBLE SACRIFICES WHICH WERE MADE ON THIS HISTORIC ISLAND IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM.

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4900

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THE MOST EXTENSIVE CONSTRUCTION ON CORREGIDOR WAS THE MALINTA TUNNEL SYSTEM. CONSISTING OF A MAIN EAST-WEST TUNNEL, 1,400 FEET LONG AND 30 FEET WIDE, THE TUNNEL HAS 25 LATERALS, EACH ABOUT 400 FEET LONG. COMMENCING IN FEBRUARY 1942 LIFE EVERYWHERE ON THE ISLAND WENT UNDERGROUND AND THE SYMBOL OF THE NEW MOLE-LIKE EXISTENCE WAS THE MALINTA TUNNEL. DURING THE BOMBINGS AND SHELLINGS IT WAS ALWAYS JAMMED WITH FILIPINOS AND AMERICANS WHO HUDDLED BACK TO BACK AGAINST THE BOXES OF FOOD AND AMMUNITION STACKED ALONG THE SIDES. CROWDED INTO THE TUNNEL WERE GENERAL MACARTHUR'S HEADQUARTERS, THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH, AN OVERCROWDED 1,000 BED HOSPITAL, VAST QUANTITIES OF AMMUNITION AND SUPPLIES, POWER PLANTS, MACHINERY, AND OTHER VITAL INSTALLATIONS. ALSO HOUSED IN THE TUNNEL WERE THE DIGNITARIES WHO HAD BEEN EVACUATED FROM MANILA. PRESIDENT QUEZON, ILL WITH TB AND CONFINED TO A WHEEL CHAIR, SPENT AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE OUTSIDE THE DUST LADEN TUNNELS.

AFTER THE SURRENDER OF BATAAN, CORREGIDOR WAS SUBJECTED TO 27 DAYS OF CONSTANT SEIGE AND BOMBARDMENT. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ALMOST TWO MILLION ROUNDS OF ARTILLERY SHELLS RAINED OVER EVERY SQUARE INCH OF THE ISLAND.

FINALLY, ON MAY 6, 1942, GENERAL JONATHAN WAINWRIGHT DECIDED TO SURRENDER IN ORDER TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF VALIANT
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MEN WHO OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE DIED.

ON FEBRUARY 16, 1945, THE AMERICANS, AFTER HAVING LIBERATED MANILA, ASSAULTED THE ISLAND WITH COMBINED PARATROOP DROPS AND ASSAULT LANDING CRAFT. AFTER 10 DAYS OF FURIOUS FIGHTING, THE ISLAND WAS FINALLY SECURED AND, ONCE MORE, THE STARS AND STRIPES WERE RAISED OVER CORREGIDOR.
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